



Buzzwords ...

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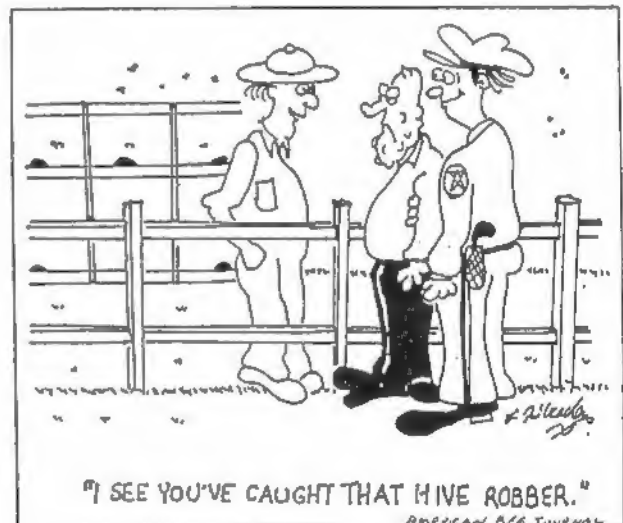
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..... the newsletter for National Beekeepers' Association members

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BEEKEEPERS UNITE OVER AUSTRALIAN HONEY

The politicians certainly know the beekeeping industry exists! Branches have responded with overwhelming enthusiasm to the call from executive to lobby government on the issue of Australian honey imports. An estimated 40 parliamentarians have been contacted and told about our industry's opposition to such imports. Questions have been raised in the House by several MP's and the issue has been covered in a number of daily papers and on *Morning Report*.

Nevertheless, the Minister of Agriculture seems intent on signing the protocols which would allow the honey into New Zealand sometime in October unless "*compelling technical arguments are presented against their adoption*" (*italics added - ed.*).

The Minister's position is based on a "risk analysis" prepared by the MAF Regulatory Authority (although the document we received doesn't acknowledge any authorship). As for technical arguments, the analysis makes several major blunders which should be of concern to all beekeepers. These include:

- * The claim that the epidemiology of EFB is "well documented". The fact of the matter is that there are still a number of big question marks about the disease, and particularly its effects on bee populations which have been isolated from the pathogen for many years.
- * The inference that EFB will not be introduced here because it has "not been reported" in places which import heat-treated honey, such as Western Australia and Papua New Guinea. The fact that both places do not have effective surveillance programmes for exotic bee diseases isn't mentioned.

* The opinion dressed up as fact that "in the **extremely unlikely** event of EFB being introduced into New Zealand, it could be controlled **easily** with oxytetracycline (OTC). Although honey trade may be adversely affected by the use of OTC, other major industries dependant on beekeeping would not. Pollination requirements for horticulture would still be able to be met. **Some beekeepers could even show a cost benefit from feeding OTC** to their bees as they would spend less time inspecting hives for both AFB and EFB." (*emphasis added* - ed.) There are so many contentious statements in this paragraph that one must wonder whether the policy makers have even read MAFQual's report on drug feeding (*Feeding Drugs to Honey Bees to Control Diseases*, 1990).

* The claim that Australian honey poses little risk of increasing AFB levels in New Zealand, because 1) "there is no evidence that the strains of AFB present in Australia differ from those in NZ" (no one has ever looked!); 2) "most hives in NZ have a period when there is no brood so further lessening the opportunity to initiate an infection" (that must be news to most beekeepers); and 3) "there is no evidence that AFB is actively spread in NZ through retail packs of diseased honey" (they certainly haven't asked beekeepers around the country who have kept hives near tips). The paper also contends that the practice of honey testing for AFB spores in NSW and the use of positive testing honey for industrial purposes "further reduces the risk that AFB infected honey will appear in NZ". The fact that this testing isn't compulsory and is used because beekeepers there fear that OTC's masking affects on AFB spore levels will lead to the spread of the disease in retail packs in Australia, isn't mentioned.

The revised draft conditions for Australian honey imports, which incorporate some of the comments made by concerned beekeepers last autumn, also seems to contain some major technical flaws. As well, we believe the short period of time made available for comment (the executive received its copy on 17 August and submissions closed on the 28th) was inadequate for careful consideration and response. Obvious problems with the draft (the risk analysis calls it the "final draft") include:

* The lack of any testing requirements for antibiotic residues in imported honey (it says that no residues should be present, but doesn't make testing a part of the certification).

* The lack of any penalties or provisions for non-conformity (except for the unwritten penalty beekeepers in NZ will face once EFB is introduced).

* The failure to provide for audits of the Australian states' certification systems by knowledgeable NZ officials. The only mention of NZ inspection is for consignment checking by officials appointed under the Food Regulations (1984) and the Food Hygiene Regulations (1974). As for the Australian processors' heat treatment systems, our government simply wants us to trust the certificates of Australian state Departments of Agriculture. Interestingly, in the Associate Minister's letter to MP Doug Kidd (10/9/92), Denis Marshall says that certification for antibiotic residues and hygiene standards will come from the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), a federal

government body. Obviously Mr. Marshall is reading a different draft from the one he sent us, since the protocol clearly says the certificates will be issued by the states. And that's part of a very real Australian problem. They have various levels of bureaucracy involved in certification with resulting lack of coordination and varying levels of credibility.

The NBA executive strongly urges every New Zealand beekeeper to contact their local MP. Call or write (no stamp required) and make sure they are acquainted with the issues. **Tell them that the MAF Regulatory Authority risk analysis is wrong.** Tell them:

- that the proposal greatly increases the risk of EFB introduction, even with the supposed safeguards of heat treatment;
- that antibiotic residues will be present in this country's purest food product, simply because the government hasn't made any provision to check;
- and finally, that AFB levels will increase, because there is no mandatory control of Australian spore levels : no research has been carried out to determine whether their strains are in any way similar to ours.

Most importantly, let the politicians know that they are subjecting our industry to a hugely increased risk of exotic disease, without taking any responsibility for that risk, simply because they want to score political points over CER.

The issue isn't over. If every person who reads this article will take the time to write or visit their Member of Parliament in the next week, there is still a chance that we can convince the Minister of Agriculture that he's making a big mistake.

Nick Wallingford, NBA Executive

OXALIC ACID TO BE USED

The threat of a court injunction hanging over the Manawatu Wanganui Regional Council's 1080 possum poisoning programme in the King Country (see *Buzzwords* 44) has now been averted, thanks to an agreement with Mr. Peter Nelson, the Animal Health Board's pest management consultant. On September 18, Mr. Nelson announced that oxalic acid would be added to all 1080 jam baits used in the area covered by the original court documents. The announcement follows an initial decision to use phosphorous baits in the affected area (see *Buzzwords* 45). We understand that 500 kg of the bait will soon be made up following the recipe Dr. Mark Goodwin and his team at Ruakura devised during research on oxalic acid as a bee repellent conducted in 1989.

Trials on oxalic acid 1080 baits are also set to get under way in a number of different areas (see *Buzzwords* 43). The following Pest Control Coordinators will be carrying out the trials: D. Read, Rodney District Council; R. Clarey, Wellington Regional Council; D. Moore, Bay of Plenty Regional Council; P. Dalgliesh, Otago Regional Council; O. Harris, Hawkes Bay Regional Council; L. Nicholls, Manawatu Wanganui Regional Council; E. Dodd, Taumaranui; C. McKellar,



Otorohanga; I. Lucas, Canterbury Regional Council. Your executive has asked all *Buzzwords* readers to cooperate fully with their local trail. If the tests are conducted properly, we have no doubt that oxalic acid will be used in all 1080 jam baits next year.

FROM THE MARKETING COMMITTEE

The Marketing Committee recently met with Bill Floyd and discussed a timetable for developing and implementing the proposals approved at the Hastings Conference. Industry funding will not be available for some time, but thanks to those beekeepers and companies who contributed towards the Honey Marketing and Promotion fund earlier this year, we have been able to decide on a priority list and get started on some aspects of the overall plan. So thank you to all those who put money forward. It has enabled us to get under way 6-9 months earlier than we could otherwise have done if we had had to wait for the levy income.

The Marketing Committee is composed of Dudley Ward, NBA president, who has vast knowledge and experience in the honey industry; Nick Wallingford, NBA executive member, who provides business planning, cost accounting, and organisational skills; Peter Bray, Airborne Honey, and Steve Lyttle, NZ Honey Co-op, two people with a strong background in honey marketing, both local and international; Sue Jenkins, who combines talents in both the food industry and beekeeping; and, of course, Bill Floyd, who provides an outside perspective and gives us the marketing direction we need to channel our energies and get the best value for the money we spend. Peter, Steve and Sue form the committee's "focus group" which works directly with Bill and reports to the rest of the Marketing Committee.

The Committee's first priority was to actually develop a plan that said in general terms where we are going. This has now been done. The next stage will be to develop a full marketing strategy and get a logo which we can use to both identify specific honey types and help to start the generic promotion of New Zealand honey. The committee also plans to carry out a full-scale promotion programme once we know the results of the bioactive manuka honey/stomach ulcer clinical trials being conducted by Auckland University.

The Honey Marketing and Promotion fund continues to accept donations. Pledges are also welcome. Please send donations and pledges to the Executive Secretary, NBA, PO Box 4048, WELLINGTON.

Sue Jenkins, Marketing Committee

THE MISSING ROYAL JELLY

We try hard to make sure *Buzzwords* is free from most typos and misspellings. We run each issue past the eyes of several proof readers before it goes to press, but sometimes, with the rush of deadlines and late-breaking news, the odd clangour still slips through.

That's what happened last month. Careful readers (more careful than the proofreaders) would have noticed the headline "1000 TONNES OF ROYAL JELLY" on page one, but no reference to this decidedly large amount of "the fountain of youth" anywhere else in the issue.

No, this wasn't a crafty ploy to get everyone to read *Buzzwords* from cover to cover. The article was all set to go when a late story had to be inserted about 1080 and the Manawatu Wanganui Regional Council. The royal jelly piece had to be pulled, but we forgot all about the headline (oops!). So please accept our apologies, and turn to the article about Chinese beekeeping. Somewhere in there you should find the royal jelly, all 1000 tonnes of it.

FROM THE BRANCHES

The next meeting of the **Auckland** branch will be held on Thursday, October 8, in the Anglican Church Hall, Coles Crescent, Papakura, beginning at 7.30 pm. The agenda will include correspondence, general business, and the organisation of disease inspections by both the commercial and hobbyist sectors.

LAB COURSE A HIT

The lab course teaching AFB spore detection techniques (see *Buzzwords* 44) has proven to be a hit with NBA branches around the country. So far 9 branches have held sessions, with a further 4 branches scheduled during the next several weeks. To date a total of 115 members have taken part in the one day workshop, which provides "hands-on" training in all the skills necessary to grow out bacterial samples from live bee and bee product samples.

Beekeepers are already putting the technique to good use. The Poverty Bay branch has contracted the local pathology lab at the Gisborne hospital to test samples collected during their spring diseaseathon. A contract lab is now also advertising the service in Auckland, and branches in other areas are coordinating the purchase of lab materials and even ready-poured agar plates. During the year, we'll keep you posted with new developments from Mark Goodwin's lab and from beekeepers using the new test.

THE RULES RULE

Besides decisions on AFB control and a marketing levy, this year's annual conference also came to another conclusion -- the NBA is faced with the need to change its rules about changing rules.

Just prior to conference it was discovered that our rules had a long-standing inconsistency that no one had ever noticed before. One rule (Rule 29) says that rule changes need to be notified "45 days prior to the date of an Annual or Special Meeting". Another, however, says that rules may only be altered "at an (sic) Special Meeting of the Association or by postal vote".

As a result, several rule changes made during Annual Meetings over the last 10 years are technically not in order. The executive must therefore arrange for the NBA to fix this inconsistency and ratify the rules that have been changed in good faith (but at the wrong meeting type) over the years.

Options available include a postal poll, a Special Meeting in the near future, or a Special Meeting to be held in conjunction with next year's conference. Your executive



HONEY INDUSTRY TRUST FUND

Applications for funding close on 15 August and 15 February. Forms available from the NBA, PO Box 4048, Wellington.

has chosen the later, for the good reason that the other options would put beekeepers and the NBA to some considerable expense. Executive believes that no real advantage would be gained by not holding a Special Meeting as part of conference.

Members are reminded that any other rule changes to be considered at this Special Meeting will need to be notified 45 days prior to conference.

RESEARCH IDEAS

The Apicultural Research Advisory Committee (ARAC) is once again collating ideas for research that beekeepers and beekeeping organisations feel would be useful to our industry. ARAC attempts to match these ideas to possible providers, including making the ideas available to graduate students as potential projects to "lure" them into beekeeping research.

If you have any ideas for investigations you think would be interesting or valuable to our industry, including honey bee science, beekeeping techniques, and marketing research, why not send them to ARAC, National Beekeepers Association, PO Box 4048, WELLINGTON.

APIMONDIA TRY AGAIN

We mentioned in *Buzzwords* 34 that the 33rd International Apiculture Congress of Apimondia, scheduled for Split, Yugoslavia, had to be postponed because of the developing conflict in the former Yugoslav republics. That congress has now been cancelled, and will be held instead in Beijing, People's Republic of China, September 20-26, 1993. The congress will have sessions on many beekeeping topics and will once again stage its famous ApiExpo, a "Beekeeping Olympics" where manufacturers of beekeeping equipment and bee products will compete for medals. There will also be optional beekeeping tours of China, one of the world's largest producers of honey.

A number of New Zealand beekeepers have attended Apimondia congresses over the years. With this one close by in the growing Asian market, it could be a worthwhile trip for both beekeepers and exporters alike. For enquiries please contact Mr. Li Wei, 33rd International Apicultural Congress, No. 33 Nonfengli, Dongdaqiao, Chao Yang District, 100020 Beijing, China, fax 00-86-1-500-5670.

CHINESE FACTS AND FIGURES

Staying on the subject of Chinese beekeeping, how about these for some interesting facts and figures -

- * In 1989 (last figures available), there were 7.3 million bee hives (*Apis mellifera* and *Apis cerana*) in China. In that

year Chinese beekeepers produced 189,000 tonnes of honey, exporting 80,000 tonnes.

- * Average production per *Apis mellifera* colony is said to be 50 to 60 kg per hive. Beekeepers who migrate their colonies (they actually use trains!) can average 110 kg/hive.
- * Beekeepers receive the equivalent of NZ\$0.52/kg for their honey. Based on average production, however, beekeepers normally have incomes 2.5 times greater than the national average.
- * Most beekeeping operations in China are private, involving three to five families working as a cooperative to manage, on average, 500 colonies. Sometimes individual families own hives. These families usually keep between 60-80 colonies, and never more than 150.
- * Chinese beekeepers produce a staggering 800-1,000 tonnes of royal jelly each year. Beekeepers there average 1 kg/hive per year, although some beekeepers have reported production as high as 4.4 kg/hive. The normal graft for royal jelly production is 125 cells per hive. The season for royal jelly production is about 7 months long in South China and 3 months long in North China.
- * Chinese beekeepers also produce a range of other products, including beeswax, propolis, venom, and drone pupae. Estimates of pollen production range from 800 to 4000 tonnes per year. In 1990, 1000 tonnes were exported to the United States.
- * The current per capita honey consumption of China (population 1.1 billion) is only 100 gm.
- * The estimated value of a bee hive in China is 120 Yuan (NZ\$41.60)

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The views expressed in *Buzzwords* are not necessarily those of the National Beekeepers' Association nor of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

